



COALITION FOR INTERIOR DESIGN  
REGISTRATION

P. O. Box 1342  
ROYAL OAK, MI 48086  
CIDR-MI.ORG

Officers

Linda Thomas, ASID, IIDA

*President*

Charles Bommarito

*Vice President*

Debbie Gonzalez

*Treasurer*

Kristin Godard

*Secretary*

Directors at Large

Dwane Adle, AIA, ASID

Margaret Bergen, IIDA Industry Member

Suzanne Buckley, ASID

Margie Cockle, IIDA

Leonard Else, ASID

Arlena Hines, ASID, IDEC

William McKay, CKD

Heidi Parris, ASID

Craig Varady

Marilyn Whitney, IDEC

Brittany Bachteal

Michigan State University

Kristin Jensen

Central Michigan University

Christopher Stefani

Lawrence Technological University

*Student Representatives*

Heidi Parris, ASID

*ASID Liaison*

Margaret Bergen, IIDA Industry Member

*IIDA Liaison*

William McKay, CKD

*NKBA Liaison*

Kevin McKinney

*Lobbyist*

March 12, 2013

The Coalition for Interior Design Registration is an organization of interior designers and allied professionals dedicated to enacting legislation to protect the life-safety of the public and promote free and fair competitive access to the marketplace.

CIDR technically is not in support or opposition of HB4378 but rather it is providing informational testimony. This is because HB4378 has minimal impact on interior designers or the interior design market in this state. HB4378 basically repeals PA250 and its provisions as they pertain to the scope of service Michigan interior designers can legally provide. PA250 does not give valid state recognition to interior designers through licensure or registration – it only “credentialized” qualified individuals. This law was signed by Governor Engler in 1998.

PA250 was a meaningful law until 2001 when it was significantly compromised by Michigan’s version of the International Building Code which reverted back to the definition of a “registered design professional” as one who is licensed or registered. Interior designers are neither registered nor licensed in the state of Michigan.

The period prior to IBC and under PA250 was the last time Michigan had a truly thriving building design market.

Regardless of how PA250 has been compromised, it still gives qualified interior designers some legal designation. The definition of services interior designers may perform is cited in PA319 of 2008 which ultimately makes it a felony for practicing architecture without a license. Since interior designers have no legal scope of service, some of the service they supply could be interpreted as practicing architecture. PA319 provides an exemption for interior designers and uses the definition from PA250. By eliminating the definition of interior design from the Occupation Code, would interior designers be at risk for legal prosecution? What about the schools that offer interior design programs?

CIDR has maintained a keen interest in regulatory framework and has advocated for many years for modifications to the existing statutory definition of interior design services would bring much needed clarification for the consumer, the interior design profession and building code officials.

CIDR is still supportive of the establishment of a substantive, nonrestrictive law in Michigan - one that will increase market competition and revenue for Michigan, boost jobs and small business growth, reduce consumer costs and promote consumer protections. CIDR looks forward to the opportunity to discuss these merits in greater depth in another venue.

Linda Thomas, ASID, IIDA

Coalition for Interior Design Registration (CIDR) President

NCIDQ Certificate No. 10352

734-355-9288 • E: lindamthomas@comcast.net

---

**Mission Statement**

The Coalition for Interior Design Registration is an organization dedicated to defend and to protect the right to practice the profession of interior design in Michigan.

March 12, 2013

My name is Dr. Marilyn Whitney and I am Assistant Professor of Interior Design at Adrian College. I was part of the group negotiating with Governor Engler in 1997 regarding PA 250. As Linda has said, our hope was that this act guaranteed the 3,000 independent interior design practitioners in Michigan the right to practice their chosen profession. Currently, we have 500 interior design students in university programs around the state of Michigan. Seven of these universities are state funded. The changes to PA 319 and IBC Codes have compromised their ability to establish careers in the state of Michigan.

As a member of the advisory subcommittee of interior design, I was one of the people reviewing the credentials of applicants for the State List of Qualified Interior Designers created by PA 250. Many of the interior designers listed have their own businesses here in Michigan. As matter of fact Linda, Charles and I all have our own independent interior design firms.

I would like to give you some background about the regulation of interior design. In 2008, my dissertation for my Ph.D. examined the history of interior design in relation to licensure. Interior design developed in the 1950s with the impetus of Building Boom. There were acres of undeveloped tenant spaces from skyscrapers to strip malls all over the United States, which needed to be designed. Most architects were not interested in developing the interiors of these buildings, so interior design expanded to meet this new market demand. Education and practice expanded and intensified with space planning of systems furniture for offices becoming a key component of commercial design.

The recession in the mid 1970s, which began with the oil embargo, put an end to the building boom in the United States. For example, in 1980 through 1983, I worked on the headquarters of Masco Corporation in Taylor, Michigan. It was one of a few projects under construction in the whole state. The recession left architecture looking for new markets to capture.

It is not a coincidence that in 1981, the BOCA Building Codes changed to capture remodeling of existing spaces for architects and professional engineers. This made licensure for interior designers a necessity, because it tacitly captured the profession of interior design for architects and engineers through regulatory rule changes. This restricted the independent practice of interior design all over the United States. In response, twenty-eight jurisdictions have passed licensing regulations.

In Michigan, although CIDR worked diligently for valid state recognition of interior designers since 1985, Governor Engler was against any new form of licensure. Lawsuits were instigated against interior designers for practicing architecture without a license simply for space planning typical tenant build outs. This is a service qualified interior designers are educated to provide. These lawsuits were the impetus to allow negotiations to begin with Governor Engler for protection of our profession. The Governor responded to our **right to practice** arguments and signed PA 250, which gave interior designers a definition and right to practice our profession within those parameters.

The intent of PA 250 when it was enacted was important for the prosperity so many small owner-operated businesses, that were and are struggling to exist in Michigan's anti-competitive design environment. Thank you so much for your attention.

Marilyn Whitney, Ph.D., IDEC  
Assistant Professor Interior Design  
111B Mahan Hall  
Adrian, Michigan 49221

E-mail: [mwhitney@adrian.edu](mailto:mwhitney@adrian.edu)  
Cell Phone: 912 704-5661



# Charles J. Bommarito

I N T E R I O R   C O N S U L T A N T   -   P L A N N E R   -   D E S I G N E R

---

15 Shorecrest Circle - Grosse Pointe, Michigan 48236 - cb19380@comcast.net - 586.771.2260

---

My name is Charles Bommarito. I am an independent interior designer. I have been practicing interior design in Michigan for over 30 years. I also sit on the CIDR Board holding a Vice President position.

I am here today in hopes that you will consider my comments on House Bill 4378 as you move forward with this bill.

I think the current language that is in existence now is important and needs to be retained as it serves to clarify, define and preserve, as was its original intent, the profession of Interior Design here in Michigan. The current language I am referring to is the language in the Bill on page 11 – lines 17 through 22 - that is being struck out.

Briefly, under Governor Engler, in order to clarify, eliminate confusion and to protect the profession of Interior Design, the current language was the resulting solution of a very long negotiating process that, in the end, all parties agreed to and a law, PA250, was passed with its purpose being to protect the Interior Design profession. That law recognized the profession of interior design, provided a description of services, a scope of practice, and allowed for qualified interior designers to have their names included on a State List of Qualified Interior Designers.

At that time, that 'State List' was considered the Interior Designers' 'license' or 'registration'.

Adopting the current code book language that defines design professionals as those individuals who are either 'licensed' or 'registered' allows for only Architects and Engineers to fit that definition as Interior Designers in Michigan are neither. In this state we are only 'listed'.

This situation, and this bill, will put into jeopardy the recognition of the qualified designer 'State List' and, along with the removal of the language that refers to, and supports, the 'State List' simply further compromises the recognition and validity it furnished to all of the states' qualified Interior Designers.

What Decorators are to decoration, and Architects are to architecture, Interior Designers are to interiors. Architects build buildings, Decorators add decorations, Interior Designers develop and execute plans that allow for interior spaces to function properly, be safe, adhere to codes and operate according to the occupants desired usage.

The current language I believe needs to continue into this new bill or I believe you will have successfully put a nail into the coffin of the profession of Interior Design in this state.

In closing let me add I have noticed that many of my friends and colleagues are all ready coming to some conclusions. Based upon what they have read, heard, or seen on the TV or the internet, many have come to believe that the Governor's position on deregulating businesses will negatively impact them further. Also too, many have started, or are currently starting, to alter their business plans accordingly. I think this is a current situation that the committee should also consider as you move forward.

Let me state that I was born in Michigan and have lived here all my life. I received my education from Michigan schools. I've practiced here all of my business years. I married a Michigander and we have raised our children here. I am not planning on leaving this state. I would much like my friends and colleagues to continue on here and stay. But, I'm a realist. I know I don't have to tell you that these are trying times especially for the small business owner and reality being what it is. Everyone bases their future decisions on what's in front of them not what's behind them.

I hope the committee will take my comments into consideration when moving forward with this or any legislation.

Thank you for allowing me to speak today.